

179 Kidmore Road, Caversham Bat Survey Report

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Report

This bat survey report has been completed in connection with the proposed demolition and rebuild of a two storey residential property at 179 Kidmore Road, Caversham, Reading RG4 7NW (OS Grid Reference SU 702 766). The location of the site is shown in *Figure 1* and the site plan is shown on *Figure 2*.

A Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) of the buildings was completed by Simon Parker of Turnstone Ecology Ltd on the 27th August 2020, a single bat emergence survey was also completed on the same day.

This report details survey and assessment methodology along with the results of on-site surveys. It also provides an assessment of potential impacts and appropriate mitigation to offset any likely impacts associated with the proposals.

Figure 1. Site Location

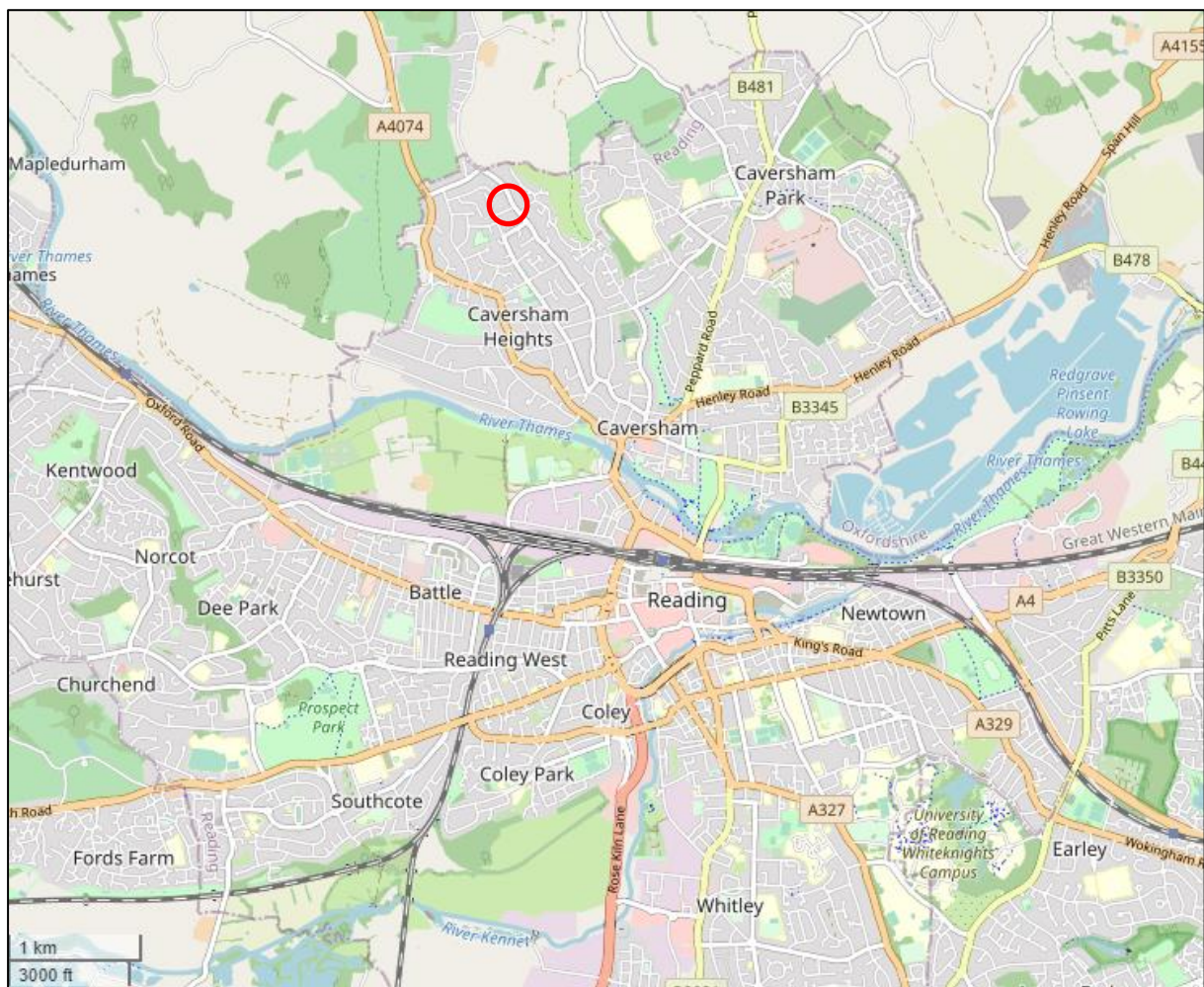
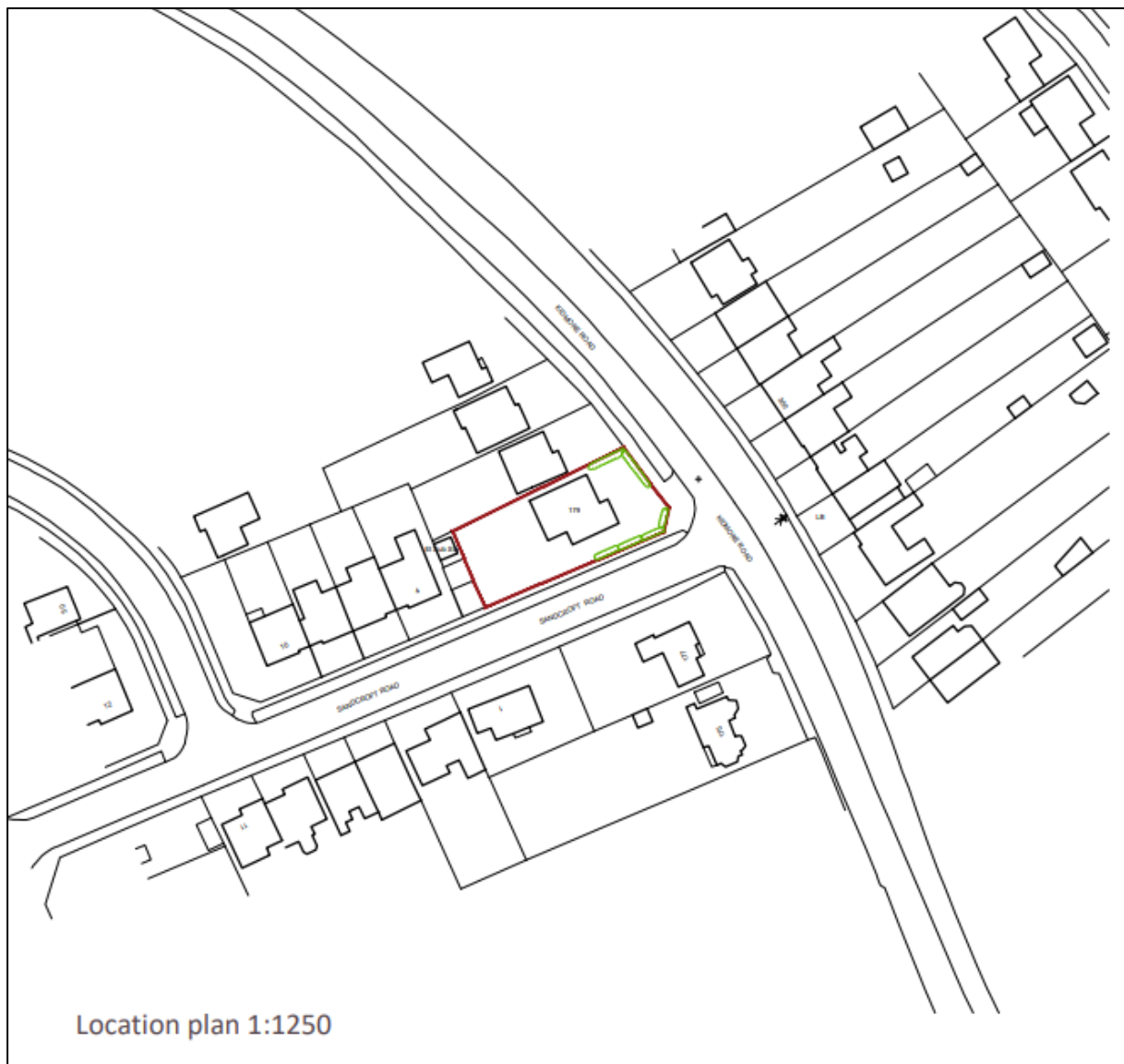


Figure 2. Site Plan

1.2 Ecological Context

179 Kidmore Road is a two storey house, currently the building is vacant but has been lived in until very recently. The site is toward the northern end of Caversham, a suburb of Reading and the immediate site surroundings comprise residential properties, gardens and small parks. Further afield the landscape contains further residential properties, parkland, woodland, a golf course, schools and the River Thames.

2 METHODS

2.1 Desk-based Study

Information relating to designated sites, sites where European Protected Species (EPS) Licences have been granted in the last five years and historic records of protected species within 2 km of the proposed development site will have been obtained from Magic (www.magic.gov.uk) and other freely available information on the internet, such as planning portals.

Any species-specific historic records are detailed within the relevant species accounts in the Results Section.

2.2 Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA)

A Preliminary Roost Assessment was carried out on the 27th August 2020 by Simon Parker of Turnstone Ecology. Simon holds a Natural England Class Licence (2015-14470-CLS-CLS) for the disturbance of bats in all counties of England. The building was assessed for its suitability for use by roosting bats. The assessment involves a consideration of various factors including;

- Light levels;
- Temperature regime and protection from weather;
- Access to the interior or to other suitable roost sites;
- Potential roost sites;
- Building construction; and
- Habitat context.

Based on these factors, an assessment was made of whether the building might support bats and the type and number of roosts that might be present.

A detailed inspection was made of the exterior and interior of the building for any evidence of bat use, such as live or dead bats, droppings, scratch marks, staining and prey remains, and in some cases the absence of cobwebs. Large quantities of cobwebs in roof voids or at access points tend to be suggestive of no bat use, although this evidence is not conclusive.

Features identified as possible bat access points or potential roosting locations were thoroughly searched where possible, using powerful torches and binoculars to facilitate the process.

The survey was undertaken in good light conditions and no recent sweeping or other cleaning had been undertaken.

Buildings are categorised according to their suitability for roosting bats as follows (Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn.) (2016¹):

Negligible – Habitat features on site with very low suitability to be used by roosting bats.

Low – A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (*i.e.* unlikely to be suitable for maternity or hibernation). Or a tree of sufficient size and age to contain potential roost features but with none seen from the ground, or features seen with only very limited roosting potential.

Moderate – A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only).

High – A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat. They could be suitable for maternity roosts or hibernation sites.

Confirmed – Roosting bats confirmed as being present, either by the discovery of live or dead bats, droppings, prey remains, scratching or fur-staining.

Habitats within and immediately adjacent to site were assessed for their suitability for use by foraging or commuting bats. Areas of particular interest vary between species, but generally include sheltered areas and those habitats with good numbers of insects, such as woodland, scrub, hedges, watercourses, ponds, lakes and more species-rich or rough grassland.

Mitigation and enhancement is designed to reduce the level of impact upon receptors and provide ecological enhancement in order to meet current legislation and planning policy. The information below has therefore been considered during assessment.

- Criteria that have been developed to assist in the identification of statutory Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) (JNCC 2013)
- Habitats and species of Principal Importance included under Section 41 (England) and Section 42 (Wales) of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006
- The legal status of habitats and species according to the EU ‘Habitats’ Directive 1992
- CIEEM Guidelines (2018) for assessing the value of ecological receptors within a defined geographical context using the following categories: international (*i.e.* Europe); UK and

¹ Collins, J. (ed) (2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn) The Bat Conservation Trust, London

national (England); regional; county; Unitary Authority; local or parish; and zone of influence. Receptors are identified as ‘important’ at these levels, or as ‘not important’

- Species protected by European directives
- Species protected by the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended)
- Other species listed as scarce or notable in literature issued by conservation organisations or learned societies *e.g.* vascular plant species listed in Stewart *et al.* (1994) and Red and Amber List Birds of Conservation Concern (Eaton *et al.* 2015)
- Local Wildlife Site selection criteria
- National Policy Planning Framework (NPPF), 2018
- BS42020:2013 – Biodiversity Code of practice for planning and development
- Protected species handbooks and best practice guidelines
- BAP, which identifies and prioritises local habitats of conservation importance; and, other species listed as scarce or notable in literature issued by conservation organisations or learned societies *e.g.* vascular plant species listed in Stewart *et al.* (1994) and Red and Amber List Birds of Conservation Concern (Eaton *et al.* 2009).

The local Reading Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) has currently expired and is in the process of being rewritten and approved. In 2020 this is expected to move away from being habitat and species focussed to being focussed on “Themes for Action”. These “themes” include; Legislation; Designated Sites; Planning and Building Control; Woodlands, Trees & Hedgerows; Grassland and Road Verges; The Two Rivers, their floodplains and other watercourses.

2.3 Activity Surveys

Dusk Emergence and Dawn Re-entry surveys are the primary methods for locating roosts in trees, buildings or built structures, as bats are not always found by internal and external inspection surveys (*e.g.* if the bats roost in areas that cannot be searched and/or leave little or no visible trace). Dusk Emergence and Dawn Re-entry surveys can also give a reasonable estimate of the number of bats present and help understand how bats are using a site for foraging and commuting.

The activity survey was carried out by three experienced ecologists from Turnstone Ecology. Full survey details are shown in the Tables below. The surveyors used Wildlife Acoustic EM Touch 2, Batbox Duet and Batbox Baton XD detectors and recording equipment along with two way radios to allow constant feedback between surveyors where appropriate. Surveyors were positioned so that all potential exit/re-entry points could be viewed. During the surveys bat activity was recorded on to survey forms including information on time, species recorded and behaviour. Continual recording was undertaken for the duration of each survey to ensure all bat activity was recorded. Relevant audio tracks were downloaded and assessed using the Kaleidoscope ver. 5.2.1 software packages to confirm the identity of bats recorded during the surveys.

The surveys at the proposed development site have been based on methods outlined in the Bat Survey Guidelines (BCT 2016) and covered the appropriate timings (up to 0.25 hours before sunset until 1.5

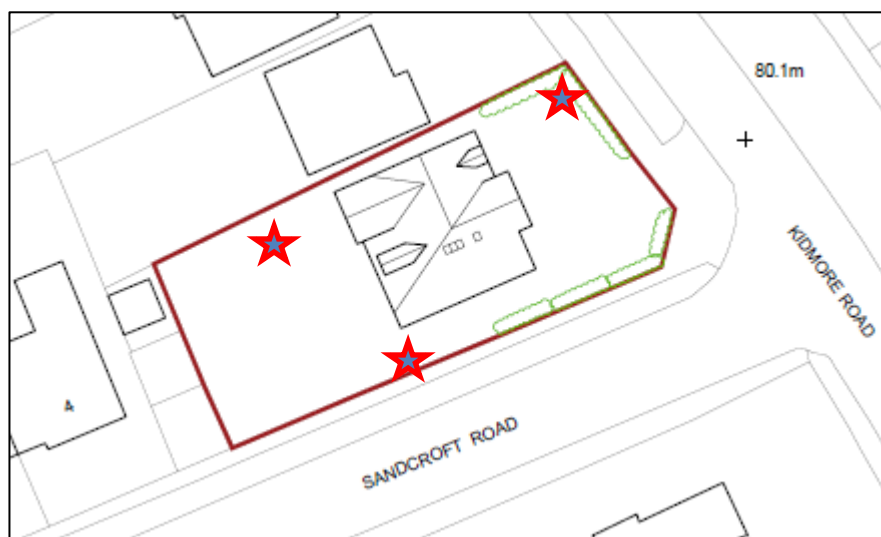
hours after sunset and 1.5 hours pre-dawn to just after sunrise). The surveys were carried out during appropriate weather conditions (details presented in *Table 1* and surveyor locations shown in *Figure 3*).

Based on the low suitability of the building, and as per the 2016 survey guidelines, one survey visit was deemed appropriate in order to rule presence/absence at the site.

Table 1- Weather Conditions

Survey Visit 1 27/09/2020 PM		
	Start	End
Time	19:45	21:35
Temp (°C)	15.1	14.4
Wind	0	0
Cloud	6	8
Precipitation	None	
Sunset/rise	20:01	

Figure 3 – Surveyor Locations



2.4 Constraints

No constraints were noted to the survey coverage and all areas of the building were accessible during the surveys.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Desk Study

3.1.1 Statutory Designated Sites

There are no statutory designated site within 2 km of the site; the closest designated site is Clayfields Copse Local Nature Reserve which is approximately 2.5 km north east of the site. Given the designation and the distance between sites no impacts to the LNR are anticipated.

3.1.2 European Protected Species Licence Sites

10 Natural England EPS mitigation licence have been granted for development sites within 2 km of the proposed development between 2009 and 2018:

- 2017-28760-EPS-MIT was granted in 2017 at a site approximately 1.3 km to the north of the proposed site for the damage of resting places of Common Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and Brown Long-eared Bats (*Plecotus auritus*)
- EPSM2012-4292 was granted in 2012 for a site approximately 1.3 km to the north of the proposed site for the destruction of roosts (resting places) of Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) and Brown Long-eared Bats
- EPSM2013-6025 was granted in 2013 for a site approximately 1.4 km to the east of the proposed site for the damage and destruction of a roost (resting place) of Brown Long-eared bats.
- 2016-27061-EPS-MIT was granted in 2017 at a site approximately 1.3 km to the south of the proposed site for the destruction of resting places of Common Pipistrelle and Brown Long-eared Bats.
- 2014-2980-EPS-MIT was granted in 2014 for a site approximately 1.2 km south of the proposed site for the destruction of roosts of Common Pipistrelle and Soprano Pipistrelle.
- 2015-13539-EPS-MIT was granted in 2015 for a site approximately 1.4 km south of the proposed site for the and destruction of roosts (resting places) of Common Pipistrelle.
- 2017-29064-EPS-MIT was granted in 2017 for a site approximately 1.3 km south of the proposed site for the damage and destruction of breeding and resting places of Soprano Pipistrelles.
- 2015-14137-EPS-MIT was granted in 2015 for a site approximately 1.3 km south west of the proposed site for the damage and destruction of resting places of Common and Soprano Pipistrelles.
- 2014-3600-EPS-MIT was granted in 2014 at a site approximately 850 m south west of the proposed site for the damage of a resting place of Common Pipistrelle
- 2015-18560-EPS-MIT was granted in 2016 for a site approximately 750 m south west of the proposed site for the damage and destruction of resting places of Soprano Pipistrelles and Brown Long-eared Bats.

3.2 Preliminary Roost Assessment

3.2.1 General

179 Kidmore Road is a detached property located on the corner of Kidmore Road and Sandcroft Road. It has until recently been occupied but was vacant at the time of survey. Immediately surrounding the property are well maintained lawns to the front and rear, wooden decking to the side and rear and a crushed slate/shale driveway.

3.2.2 Building Description

The house is two storey building with integrated garage. It has a pitched roof covered with interlocking concrete tiles and the walls are covered with painted concrete render. At the gable walls there are small areas of horizontal wooden tongue and groove cladding. It is estimated that the building was originally constructed in the late 1960's/early 1970's though it was extended more recently and subject to modernisation approximately 6 years ago to bring it to its current condition.

Generally the walls of the building are in good condition, with no gaps or cracks in the render. There is some subsidence on the southern wall of the garage meaning some stepped cracks are present, although these were all blocked by debris.

The wood cladding at each gable wall is in good condition with no gaps noted, some very small gaps are present at the points where the cladding joints meet the soffit boxes though these are considered too small to allow bat access.

The roof of the building has tightly interlocking concrete tiles and ridge with plastic dry verge system and uPVC soffits and fascia's. Internally there are two loft spaces, one above the main living areas and one above the garage. Each roof has wooden untrussed rafters and a modern breathable lining. The internal ridge height is low in the main loft, measuring approximately 1.2m at the highest points, the internal height of the garage loft space is lower, with a sloping roof above. Both loft spaces were part boarded and part insulated and no evidence of bat use was found in either space.

Plates 1-2 show the exterior of the building and *Plates 3-5* show the interior.

Plate 1. 179 Kidmore Road from front.



Plate 2. 179 Kidmore Road from rear.



Plate 3. Main loft space, looking west.



Plate 4. Garage loft space, looking east.



Plate 5. Interior of garage



3.2.3 Evidence of Roosting Bats

No evidence of roosting bats was noted on the interior or exterior of the building, and the only potential roosting locations (stepped cracks in walls) could be fully searched and were found to be full of debris and not contain evidence of use by bats. The roof, soffits and walls are all very well sealed with no potential access points noted.

3.2.4 Evidence of Other Protected Species

No evidence of other protected species was noted during the survey, however the hedges to the front, side and rear of the property could be used by common species of nesting bird such as European Robin or Blackbird although no active or old nests were noted during the survey.

3.3 Bat Activity Surveys

Based on the location, the property type and the work proposed, a single bat activity survey was completed on the evening of 27th August. During the survey no bats emerged from the property or showed behaviour indicating roosting locations. During the survey activity from up to two Common Pipistrelles was noted within the front and rear gardens.

4 EVALUATION

4.1 Summary of Results

4.1.1 General

The proposed work involves the demolition of the existing property and rebuilding of a replacement dwelling on a comparable footprint.

4.1.2 Preliminary Roost Assessment

Minimal suitable roosting features were noted on the exterior of the property, with stepped cracks present around the garage. These could be fully searched and not found to contain evidence of bats. No evidence of bats or other potential roosting locations were identified around the property.

4.1.3 Activity Surveys

No bats were recorded using the property during the activity survey.

4.1.4 Evaluation of Roosting Bats

The building is not considered to be a bat roost, with no evidence of use by bats and extremely minimal available roosting opportunities.

4.2 Mitigation and Enhancement

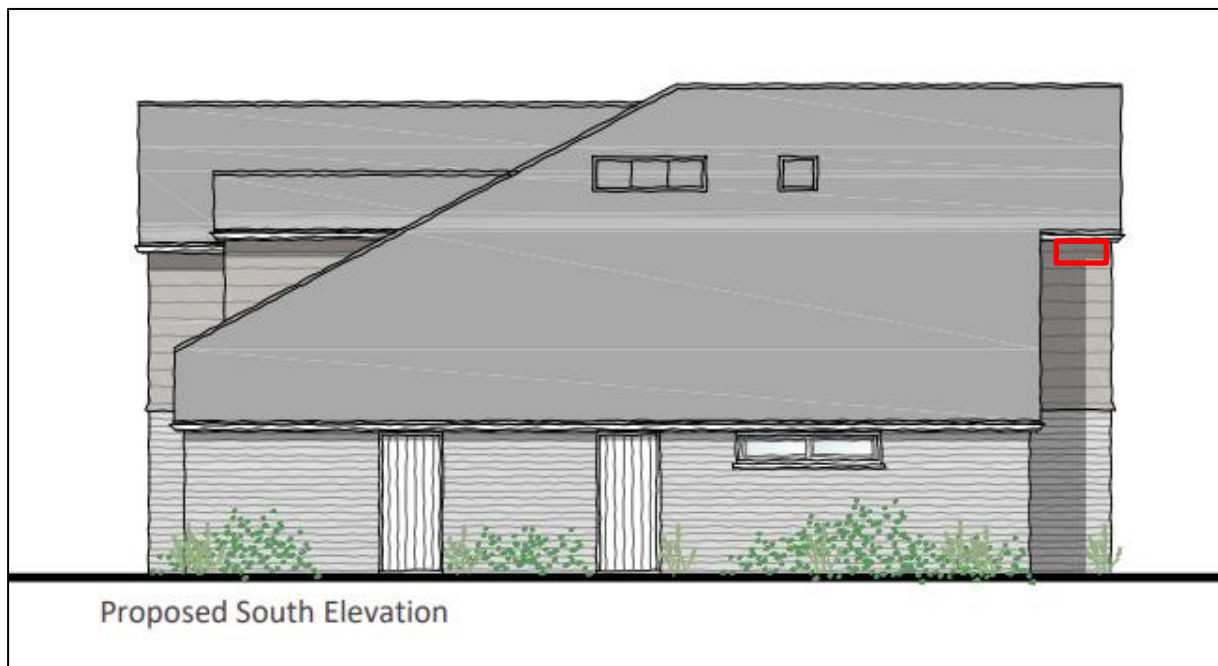
4.2.1 Bats

Since the property is not used by bats no mitigation is recommended.

National Planning Policy Framework places an emphasis on enhancements relating to biodiversity being included in developments. As such, provision will be made in the replacement dwelling for roosting bats and nesting birds. These will be with a single built-in bat box (such as Schwegler 1FE bat box) which will be built into the wall behind the wooden cladding at the southern aspect of the eastern gable wall (*Figure 4*), and a single wooden bird box mounted to a retained tree in the rear garden.

Exterior lighting, if used, will be low level and fitted with timers and sensors to prevent increasing ambient light levels on site.

Figure 4. Bat box location



5 LEGAL PROTECTION

This section briefly describes the legal protection afforded to the protected species referred to in this report. It is for information only and is not intended to be comprehensive or to replace specialised legal advice. It is not intended to replace the text of the legislation but summarises the salient points.

5.1 Bats

All species of British bat are protected by *The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended) extended by the *Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000*. This legislation makes it an offence to:

- intentionally kill, injure or take a bat;
- possess or control a bat;
- intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to a bat roost; and
- intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat whilst it occupies a bat roost.

Bats are also European Protected Species listed on *Schedule 2* of the *Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010* (SI 2010/490) under *Regulation 41*. This legislation makes it an offence to:

- deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat;
- deliberately disturb bats in such a way as to be likely to (a) impair their ability to: (i) to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young, or (ii) in the case of animals of a hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate or migrate; or b), to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong; and
- damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a bat; and
- possess, control, transport, sell, exchange a bat, or offer a bat for sale or exchange.

All bat roosting sites receive legal protection even when bats are not present.

Where it is necessary to carry out an action that could result in an offence under the *Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010* (SI 2010/490) it is possible to apply for a European Protected Species (EPS) licence from Natural England (NE). Three tests must be satisfied before this licence (to permit otherwise prohibited acts) can be issued:

- Regulation 53(2)(e) states that licences may be granted to “preserve public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment.”
- Regulation 53(9)(a) states that a licence may not be granted unless “there is no satisfactory alternative”.
- Regulation 53(9) (b) states that a licence cannot be issued unless the action proposed “will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range”.

5.2 Nesting Birds

All species of bird are protected under *Section 1* of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended). The protection was extended by the CRow Act.

The legislation makes it an offence to intentionally:

- kill, injure or take any wild bird;
- take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; or
- take or destroy an egg of any wild bird.

Certain species of bird are listed on *Schedule 1* of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended) and receive protection under *Sections 1(4)* and *1(5)* of the Act. The protection was extended by the CRow Act. The legislation confers special penalties where the above-mentioned offences are committed for any such bird and also make it an offence to intentionally or recklessly:

- disturb any such bird, whilst building its nest or it is in or near a nest containing dependant young; or
- disturb the dependant young of such a bird.